

31st March, 1982

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Dear Kelly:

Many thanks for your letter of 17th March, as well as the enclosure of Colonel Lawson's letter to me of 5th March. The original of the colonel's letter was delivered to me the day following the copy you sent me. Apparently it was pouched to Langley from the Pentagon and the pouch went astray for several weeks.

I see no problem in complying with the ground rules set out in the first paragraph of Colonel Lawson's letter. I should note, however, that the Smithsonian already has statutory authority from Congress "to receive and preserve surplus military property," so that any exchange of documents between Air Force and the Museum is superfluous, according to Museum officials who have been down this road with the military services before.

I am enclosing a copy of the business cards of the three principals of the Air & Space Museum with whom I have been conducting talks on the acquisition. Mr. Robert C. Mikesch, Curator of Aircraft, Department of Aeronautics, has my vote as the "Smithsonian point of contact" called for in the second paragraph of Colonel Lawson's letter, and I will so advise Lawson.

Paragraph three (a) of the 5th March letter seems to have been cared for by the second paragraph of your 17th March letter. As for timing of the transfer, the Museum says that they are ready whenever you are; all that would be useful is to be advised when the trucks depart Palmdale and a rough estimate of their ETA Silver Hill, Maryland, which is just off the Capitol Beltway. They would then rent a cherry picker to assist in offloading and reassembly. As for paragraph three (d) on specifics of turnover ceremony, I personally think that would await reassembly of the aircraft, and, in keeping with the balance of the colonel's letter, it would probably be in a much lower key than we had envisioned when it looked feasible to fly the aircraft to Washington.

In paragraph three (e), the question of the "manner in which the Smithsonian will display aircraft" is raised. Initially it would be displayed at the Paul E. Garber Facility in Silver Hill, quite probably indoors in Building 21 which is now being cleared of bits and pieces from the space program so that it can become another exhibit area. The building, which resembles a Butler hangar, is 100 X 200 feet inside dimensions with no supporting center pillars. Its basic problem is that it does not have conventional hangar doors, which might require that

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reassembly be accomplished inside the structure. Some thought is being given to suspending it from the overhead beams, though as of this week, Messrs. Lopez and Mikesch did not have available numbers on the structural capabilities of the beams, nor, of course, did they have a hard estimate of aircraft weight.

This brings us to another matter in which the Museum has a keen interest. When I told them that you were planning to remove and return to Air Force the components you list in paragraph 6 of your 17th March letter to Lawson, they asked in forceful tones that this not be done, saying that their mission in aircraft restoration and preservation was "to capture the entire aircraft's technology," as opposed to displaying a shell. Since I understand that, including NASA's aircraft, there are only three operational "C" models, plus the two that will remain at Palmdale after 347 leaves, I wonder if it might not be possible to retain those components, excluding probably the Q Bay ballast? The subject of removing autopilot, AHRs components and avionics has not been brought up by the Air Force to my knowledge.

In the context of what I have said above, the Museum officials would prefer to have the slipper tanks left on the aircraft as being consistent with the U-2C model designator, and the same is true with the jet engine tail pipe. They tell me that they are pursuing on their own acquisition of a run-out J-75 engine - even one with a cracked case - that might be installed in the aircraft, even though they realize that it would not be a PL3B variant. I believe their prospective source to be the Air National Guard, which is phasing out the F-105. This would not mitigate against displaying the J-57 engine you would send East, which would be shown nearby the aircraft as representative of the original powerplant for the U-2 in its initial deployment. After all, we have all concluded that the best case mode - that of returning the aircraft to its original U-2A configuration was economically infeasible, and as a result, the "C" model inlets remain, quite distinctively different than the "A" model, not to mention the dorsal canoe. If the original J-75 engine installation drawings are made available to the Museum, I am confident that their A&P people can fit it in the aircraft, including the manufacture of whatever brackets might be required. Like the Chinese, these men are excellent at "reverse engineering" when need be!

Since I am covering a broad part of the waterfront today, I guess I should mention the matter of "appropriate markings," which you mentioned in your 17th March letter. My personal predilection would be to display it without markings, save for a three digit tail number, as it was flown by this Agency. If I judge the current thinking of the Air Force properly, I suspect they would want the full enchillada - Stars and Bars, military tail number, the lot. What are your views on this Kelly?

Finally, in the matter of the eventual display of the aircraft in the Air & Space Museum downtown, there may be some problems.

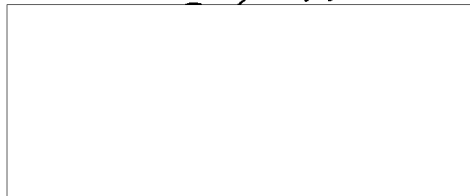
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These problems are brought on by wingspan versus available width of the Museum Building. In the first place, the width of the access doors to the Museum is a mere 30 feet. It appears possible, or I should say probable, that there would have to be a disassembly/reassembly exercise to get it inside. Secondly, I am told that the width of the East and West Galleries is only 66 available feet, implying that it would have to be displayed in a banked attitude at best. The other question concerns the number and positioning of the ceiling hard points from which the bird would have to be suspended, as well as their bearing load capacities. These items are under study at the moment. I would have to assume that display at the Silver Hill Facility would be for several years, since the Museum has a program laid out for exhibit rotation that extends for a good many months. There is a P-38 at Silver Hill that would go in ahead of the U-2, for example, and only recently did they get to installing Lindbergh's "Sirius" float plane - another LAC product to go with the Winnie Mae, the Vega of Earhart's, your XP-80 and the NASA 104. Downstream there are plans by the Museum to construct an exhibition facility at Dulles International Airport to display some of the larger aircraft that simply won't fit anywhere else, but given the present state of the economy and the preoccupation of Congress with underfunded social programs, that structure, however Spartan, will probably have to wait better times.

I expect shortly to receive a letter from Bob Mikesh, based on talks he, Don Lopez and I had this week, setting forth some of the Museum's viewpoints on the U-2. I think it best if I wait to receive that communication before replying directly to Colonel Lawson's 5th March letter. In the meantime, your reflections and suggestions would be most welcome.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



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